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PALYA ART Newsletter 2014

Greetings,

I'm thrilled to report that Palya Art will be back in the air as from May. Recent months spent in Europe enabled time for reflection and development and to organise several beautiful exhibitions; in Paris, Berlin and London.

The exhibition 'Luminous', from the private collection, was wonderfully received by people in Paris when at the Australian Embassy. 'Luminous', kindly opened by the Director of the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), Tony Elwood, ran during NGV's block busting 'Tjukurrjtjanu' show, just a short walk away at Musee du Quai Branly. 'Tjukurrjtjanu', a unique, heart-stopping exhibition, showcased early Papunya Tula Artists' paintings from the 1970s to 1990s.

'Luminous' meanwhile - which included Ronnie Tjampitjin's and Yala Yala Gibbs, artists in 'Tjukurrjtjanu', but 20 years on - highlighted Australia's incredible art movement in motion with our desert artists brilliant, contemporary paintings from 1994 to 2004. Responses varied from smiles to tears, excitement to silent awe. Many a visitor has determined to come to Australia to meet our country's Indigenous artists and understand more about the cultures.

I loved seeing the classic 'boards' hanging in Paris having known many of the artists who created them; just one of the privileges nursing in Walungurru in the mid 1980s. The crowds grew and grew at Quai Branly as word got around about 'Tjukurrjtjanu'. The Parisiennes loved it, speaking about the show excitedly when coming to 'Luminous' later. I'm sure 'Tjukurrjtjanu' would have continued to grow in visitor numbers had not its time come, sadly, to a close.

A little anecdote - there was a video running of the artists in Walungurru during 'Tjukurrjtjanu' which made me feel so at home and happy. Apart from familiar faces in familiar times, in the background in one strip, I could see Old Jim Dooley on his intrepid yellow road grader. There he was, rumbling along. Dear Old Jim Dooley. He'd graded an airstrip for me at one of the outstations but it ran in the wrong direction with the strong winds for my taildragger 'plane. I asked him why he'd graded it cross wind and he said because 'grading downwind got the sand in his eyes'. Without Jim keeping roads open and strips landable, the minimal health service we already had would have been even more isolated - there were no telephone lines back then; just a two way radio that only worked during daylight hours (due HF radio wave bounce).

I stayed through the winter in Paris to immerse myself in multiple museums and galleries, and to be with 'Luminous' for floor talks and Embassy functions. Each artist in 'Luminous' was at some point compared to a famous European painter. Only with an added power and 'punch'. Like Yurlurlu

Lorna Fencer's yellow and green Yam People's war and peace painting; her pigment strikingly sensuous and bright like Van Gogh's Sun Flowers. Kutungka Napanangka; she and her family walking under a full white moon at night, gracefully treading a bright white salt lake in the desert was compared to Jasper Johns by one viewer "only better". And Makinti Napanangka's country around Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay) was discussed frequently along with Monet's water lilies, yet there was disturbance - the viewer being aware of something unique and powerful; a forceful movement, life, going on. Living with these same Makinti paintings myself the past seven years (before a cyclone got too close to Darwin for their comfort), and every day with them in Paris, in a different light and context, it seems more certain to me that Makinti was painting not only her country and culture, but time, a galaxy of time.

For NAIDOC week, Palya Art sent 'SUN FLYING' to the Australian Embassy in Berlin. This cheerful, considered exhibition of painters from Australia's central deserts, included Bai Bai Sunfly Napangardi's painting 'Pilpiyka' and, it still being cold in Europe, I hoped the title and brilliant artwork would bring sunshine and thoughts of coming to Australia, especially to meet Bai Bai herself whom I describe as a Senior Law Woman who is energetic, thoughtful and wise in her 'learning us up' about country.

In London, for BighArt's production of 'Namatjira' at the Southbank Centre, Namatjira's family and BighArt were very keen to have an exhibition in view in the foyer during their show. But as time drew near to the performance start, and the logistics for having an exhibition at all nearing impossible, I was glad to assist where I could in making sure a beautiful display of watercolours was present. I felt it was so important, and a wonderful opportunity for the artists. Palya Art pulled together and facilitated 'Living Watercolours' the Namatjira family legacy'. I travelled from Darwin to Alice Springs where I selected 26 gorgeous, and available, watercolours, then brought them to Sydney to be handsomely framed. 'Living Watercolours' reached shipment with 30 mins. to spare. The exhibition was short lived but a big success, not only in the paintings beauty and expertise, and as Ambassadors, but in sales. You may like to read [*On Namatjira's plains, appreciation for a familiar landscape reborn*](#)

Now we are back in the air and I'm looking forward to flying all of you wishing to come and 'put your finger on the pulse of the Nation', as one frequent traveller and friend described. Back to the communities facilitating social, environmental, cultural and spiritual experiences for fellow Australians, and visitors from abroad of whom we can expect many more to this wonderful country,

Kind Regards to you all,

Helen Lead